

transmantra

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Transcultural Manifesto

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(Translated by Sharmistha Lahiri, India)

Transculturaction requires experimenting and promoting critical practices of transcultural action between spheres of contemporary knowledge with an aim to produce a new cosmovision of community. It is to be obtained through forms of creative action and healthy interaction among persons of the human race, between genders and generations, between cultures; between humans and non-humans, between the living and the planet inhabited by all of us collectively and the cosmos, we having a role in both. We believe, and not we alone, that Multiculturalism and Interculturality are two word-concepts that require a thorough revision in Western Europe and European Union where we live. While Multiculturalism is going through an evident political crisis, Interculturality, on its part, appear to be a fragile boat caught in the throes of a Mediterranean crisis of significance. We hold that the recent clamorous announcement of a political crisis by the German Prime Minister Angela Merkel represents the latest consequences of the persistent and muddled Eurocentric vision of the unitary politics of Europeans united in the galaxy of stars. As we see it, it is also the result of the missing de-colonization of the European people from themselves, from having been and continuing to be, both colonies and masters. This was a request made to the Europeans by two of the great intellectuals of the twentieth century: one was French and the other from the Martinique Islands: Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon.

Multiculturalism and ‘interculturality’ are word-concepts that have been borne down by the missed out but increasingly urgent de-colonization of our minds, still colonial: first, in relation to the civilizations violated by us *co-co* [conquerors-colonized], the **planetariums** of modernity, and then re-adapted in Europe to “welcome” the Africans and the Asians. This happened predominantly after the incomplete and failed process of de-colonization of the people ravaged by us, but above all, in response to the recent Big Migration of the “wretched of the earth” into the narrow territories of the already overcrowded peninsular tail of Eurasia. There are 60 million inhabitants, for example, in Italy. To aspire to happiness, we need to be half of that, including the 20% immigrants co-evolving with us. It would mean cleaning up *Bel paese* (the Land Beautiful, Italy) from the layers covering it, from garbage in the roads and fields, from cement and eternit, from corruption and lies in the political life, from the misfortune of being the country in European Union that suffers most from criminality, the only social form that evolved along with the civil society, rendering it nameless and nullified.

Today, Europeans have discovered themselves to be racists in their own homes. This kind of ‘neo-racism’ in democracy is the strongest sign of the failure of the politics of forced multiculturalism and the abstract interculturality which can be defined at best as willing and charitable. We believe that the crisis in these models of social adjustment is bringing into the open the old colonial pretensions deeply recessed in the European mind, whether in the old colonies or at home, of the ex-imperial powers: assimilation in France and integration in U.K, Germany, and with much confusion, Italy. It is necessary to recognize that the great intercultural relation between us Europeans and the persons-multitude, who are coming to Europe, is distorted and unjust at its core. The migrants, in fact, arrive here not to conquer or colonize but to live with us for the possibility of a more just and salubrious life in a new transcultural community, to build together *in Europe*. We, instead, continue to dismiss this “banal” vision of co-evolution, for it could be potentially threatening. If we continued to think, nonetheless, reflecting honestly on the question in its depth, we would in fact realize that *only* the migrants are *truly* capable of desiring a “just and concrete utopia”. In fact, they are the bearers of a sound humanity, for today

and for future. This discovery, instead of creating an identity-panic and racist rage, should lead the Europeans to construct a wider vision of life to be lived on the basis of sharing with other people. As it has been attempted in some of the small communes of southern Italy, that Meridion without Meridian, that land not marked by time, for it never had its time. A region devastated by poverty, emigration and crime. The people of Calabria requested the immigrants who like the shipwrecked arrived in boats at the shores of the Ionian Sea, to remain with them in the little towns of Calabria: Badolato, Riace, Caulonia and others, to give hope to each other that it might be possible to re-live life in a different way together, living for a better day. In 2010, the German director Wim Wenders shot the documentary-narrative film titled 'Il volo' (The Flight) on this phenomenon which was not so much of a mere 'welcome' as an invitation to the foreigners to work together to reconstitute life to each other. But the other Europeans who rule over lives, of ours, others, and those of the future, are able only to safeguard the privileges of modern civilization created by violence and usurpation: business, in every way possible, and command, always. The European government machineries are not capable of securing for the immigrants even a modicum of treatment which is worthy of the "enlightened middle-class" culture. Not even a "dirty politics" [as Barney's daughter tells Barney] appropriate for the task that involves foreseeing and resolving the difficulties and conflicts, police laws and racism, charity and solidarity. It means that we are not able to think about any future and even less to prepare a transcultural society, to be lived along with those who, even when not knowing, desire it.

Transculturation originates and thrives – as an anthropological concept and a common word, although of a refined origin: *transculturacion* and *transculturação* – in the central part of the Americas, that is, the Antilles and the southern part of the *mundus novus* (New World). As nations, they are not poor but have been impoverished and ruined, and not subdued, by European and later North American colonialism. Transculturation helps to recognize as evident the history of every culture to hybridize with other cultures and to generate new and unpredictable 'creole' forms. Just as Fernando Ortiz, Oswaldo de Andrade, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant, Walter D. Mignolo, Roberto Fernández Retamar, Edouard Galeano, Sub-commandant Marcos, Leonardo Boff, and

many others have taught us. Transcultural thought and action point to what takes place in the reciprocity of exchange and the unforeseeable transformation, away from violence and command. Following the Latin American thinking, we would like to present ourselves as those who offer a response from the part of Europe, in counterpoint and in rapport. We have identified and structured the idea and project of transculturation in three movements, not so much successive as instead contemporary and co-evolving: Decolonization, Creolization and turning into a World-Community, all on a reciprocal basis. For, as the Epicurean philosopher Philodemo of Gadara wrote, only each can save the other. Only thus the new poetic of Interbeing and Relationship can replace peacefully, even if implacably, the metaphysical markings of the “ancient European regime”: Being, Identity and Universality. These philosophical categories later became ideological and are now words that are abused and do not merit mention, being false. We consider these to be still the most potent markings of the superstitious Eurocentric cosmivision that by rhetoric holds sway over the political leadership and a wide section of the European ‘people’, even though the process of its extinction has begun. The transcultural cosmivision and its practical and training mission, which constitute the “action” in the word ‘transculture-action’ and the new intention of “doing together”, would serve us Europeans to de-colonize ourselves, to creolize us and to turn into a world community. The first step in this regard is really the liquidation and jettisoning of the Eurocentric iron concept of modernity: the pretension that we can do everything and on our own, being the people who carry the torch of a superior civilization. That ode of “The White Man’s Burden” of Kipling, written in 1898, will be countered by the cannibal motto of Oswaldo de Andrade, from his ‘Anthropophagous Manifesto’ of 1928: “Before the Portuguese discovered Brazil, Brazil had discovered happiness”. We should learn, educate and salvage ourselves together with the migrants and with all the cultures of the world that we have put on the road to extinction with our “discovery”. All that does not by any means imply the surrendering of the European identity, or even better: an escape from our historical responsibility. It signifies our decision to opt for re-educating ourselves to be able to see and recognize that which is being offered to us in the twenty-first century, an extraordinary chance to create a New World in Europe too. We think that Modernity will not be able to end before that happens or without that happening. It is like the time when

having to deal with the Goths from Scandinavia, the Magyars from the Steppes, and the Moors from Arabia and Africa, the Europe of the day became Europe in common.

Transculturation is a way to recognize and comprehend properly (à propos, said Montaigne) the migratory and social phenomena of our time, and to propose and build new statutes of individual and community well-being. While experiencing “living together in society with a wholesome humanity” and “creative co-evolution”, we intend to engage in research and experiment with changes in the ordering and solidity of knowledge, in the itineraries of school training, in the projects of community experiences, in the modes of sharing creativity. If not now, when? – wrote Primo Levi, one of the witnesses of the victims of insane European brutality.

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Christina de Caldos Brito, Rome, from Brazil.

Bozidar Staniscic, Udine, from Bosnia, or ex-Yugoslavia: “I am not sure of anything about where I am truly from...”